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PAGAN MANNERS
OR
Are There Any Dead Animals in The Soup?

by Grey Cat, Members Advocate

I can hear the outraged screams already. there are people out there who believe that the very idea of "Pagan Manners" is a conflict in terms; that "manners" are outdated, dishonest and hypocritical. Well, think again. Manners constitute the only successful technique ever discovered by humankind to enable groups and individuals, holding moderately disparate views, customs or beliefs, to get along together. There are things more improtant than manners; but, without manners, its unlikely that a discussion will ever go to them.

Pagan manners are fairly simple and have nothing to do with which fork you use or how to word an invitation. They have to do with respect for others' feelinsg and beliefs. They most specifically have to do with recognition of the fact that you should "judge not th path of your brother or sister for their path is sacred." Manners are also the only way of attempting to grant everyone the personal space which each of us needs. There have been a number of attempts to write down a list of "thou shalts" and "thou shalt nots" which will cover Pagan life. Here are several tries made by four different people:

MY OWN OPINIONS

1. Never assume that you are invited to a ritual or a nonpublic gathering just because your friend is invited. Have your friend call the group doing the event and ASK! (or call yourself).

2. When participating in a ritual led by a group of which you are not a member, ask ahead of time what will be done. SHould there be something in the explanation, or in the set-up of the ritual area which bothers you,

just quietly don't participate in the ritual.

3. Ask the person(s) officiating at a ritual before you place anything in the ritual area; wear clothing or tools which might be considered unusual; or add private energy workings to the ritual being done.

4. Never just walk out of a cast ritual circle. Ask someone in the group sponsering the ritual to cit you a door if your eally and truly absolutely have to leave.

5. Don't make comments on the ritual, its leaders or the amount or quality
of the energy raised during the ritual unless such opinions are asked for by the leaders. Save it for your friends, privately, after the ritual is over.

6. Vegetarians, Vegans, Strict Carnivors, Diabestics, and any others with very strong food preferences: no one minds your asking quietly and politely
"Which dishes have meat (sugar, spices, hot pepper, etc.) in them?" When planning a meal for mized Pagan/Wiccan groups, it is strongly suggested that at least some of the dishes be vegetarian, sugar-free, relatively non-spicey etc. At all times, within and without the ritual context, always
provide an alternative to alcholic beverages.

7. While many people have become far less secrative about their membership
in a Pagan group, it is never, EVER, permissible to "blow someones cover". Do not ever call a friend or acquaintence by their Pagan name or mention their membership in a mundane situation. It is also bad manners - and a symptom of social climbing - to call an individual by his/her mundane name in a Pagan situation. It always reminds me of an extra calling John Wayne "The Duke" at a local bar.

8. Whether you drink, take drugs or indulge in other similar behavior is completely your own buisness. It is always wrong to urge such behavior on any other individual. The majority of serious Pagan groups absolutely do
NOT allow anyone under the influence of drugs or alchol to participate in ritual. Do not be offended of you are turned away for this reason. If you are taking a psycho-active drug for a medical reason it is very wise to check with the ritual elader(s) so they will understand and can advise you if they feel the ritual might be harmful to you.

9. Just because most Pagans/Wiccans are udner 40 and in reasonably good physical condition, never assume that everyone is. Rituals and gatherings should be planned so that those with physical problems are not barred totally from participation. Particularly in ritual, be aware that many more
people than you might think are "mobility disabled." Group ritual should take place in an accessable area and some thought should be given to designating a safe place for those not taking part in dancing to stand or sit. Please be alert to anyone to whom help would be welcome. Help them to

find a campsite which minimizes walking - to the ritual area, to the privys,
to the eating area - whatever. Help them pitch their camp. Don't make them feel unwlecome - most handicapped people have worked extra hard on their magickal skills and may be able to add a great deal to the power in ritual and to the success of the gathering.

10. When at any sort of gathering, please be thoughtful. Particularly please
observe true quiet after midnight. No one minds if you and others want to stay up all night talking or whatever. Everyone else minds a great deal if you stay up talking and laughing loudly and/or drumming. Thoise hosting a gathering should take the responsibility of keeping the noise level very low in at least some of the sleeping areas - and designating it as a quiet area.

11. Do not allow yourself to get the idea that you know the One True, Right
and Only Path! Even if you really do have the conviction that what someone else is doing is "wrong", "incorrect", "Left-hand path" or whatever, just don't talk about it. It is perfectly permissible to refrain from participating in the activities of those with whom you cannot feel comfortable.
It is not acceptable to express the idea that they "shouldn't" be doing it.
This is not to say that if you know of criminal behavior on the part of a so-called Pagan/Wiccan group you should not report it. We must also be responsible for cleaning up our own act.

Paganism is glorified by its diversity. Please do not allow yourself to express judgement by categories. Whether or not you like or dislike blacks,
Indians, Homsexuals, women, men, or whatever, keep it to yourself! If you really and truly cannot feel comfortable taking part in a ritual which isn't conducted according to the tradition you follow or if you cannot be pleasant in company mixed with groups you disapprove of, please just stay home.

PAGAN/CRAFT ETIQUETTE by Soapbox Sam

Listed below are not hard and fast rules, but some helpful guidelines for those who would function smoothly in a craft/Pagan environment.

1. Should you write to someone for information, always enclose an SASE (Self-addressed, Stamped Envelope). Many of us receive several inquiries a day. Sometimes just answering them, much less having to pay the postage and
buy envelopes, is a time-consuming, expensive task!

2. Should your inquiry be about Pagan/Craft folks in your area, tell about
yourself, and how you came to have our names and wrote to is - after all the Inquisition is alive and sick here in the heart of the Bible Belt. Do

not expect names and addresses unless they are already "public". Most of us,
even the "public" Pagan/Craft folks prefer to meet people slowly and carefully
over a cup of coffee in a public place, before we start introducing you to
our groups and our friends. Why should we risk when you have risked nothing?
((Sometimes I get mail that simply has a name and address on it and demand
that I send the latest copy of my newsletter or the names and addresses/phone
numbers of all Craft people in the writer's areas. One man sent me a letter
raising hell because he has (according to him) sent me $0.33 in the mail and
was waiting on the copy of my newsletter "I owed him"! Sadly, this type of
letter is more common than not... his letter and 33 cents, is ever sent, was
never recveived. Do I really have to explain to grown mature adults about
sending money through the mails???))

3. If you are invited to a gathering or festival, whether by written or oral
invitation, before you invite others, get permission. Because of space,
or other considerations, the number of people that can be accommodated might
be limited, or certain individuals or groups may not be welcome because of
personality conflicts and resulting disharmony. Also, if a weekend gathering
is scheduled and you can only arrive for the ritual and then must leave,
aske if that is OK... sometimes the ritual is the climax of the entire
gathering, rather than an event in itself; in that case to show up only for
the ritual not having been part of the entire event is to 'take-away' from
the meaning of thw hole for those who were there!

4. Always inquire what you should bring to any gathering. If you have
received an official invitation, you should have been told. But, assume
nothing! Ask if you need to bring food, robes, candles, drinks, eating
utensils (forks, cups, plates, etc). It is unreasonable and rude to assume
that an invitation to a gathering means that people just like yourselves,
will expect you to come and eat their food, use their utensils and leave a
mess for them to clean up after you have gone. If you cannot take food, then
at least offer the gathering sponsers a cash donation to help defray their
cost. If you can't stay to help clean up afterwards, at elast be considerate
enough to get your own refuse to a garbage container.

5. To be invitred to participate in anotehr's ritual is NOT your right, but
rather a privilage and an honor. If you are unfamiliar with their tradition,
common courtesy demands that you at least inquire about enough information
to participate in a spositive fashion, and most certainly, make no

assumptions about adding anything to the circle or placing your "special' crystals, totems, whatever in the circle or at a specific place within the circle without getting permission. Also, do not remove anything from a circle even should you feel it doesn't belong, without explaining why and getting permission.

6. It should not have to be said, but then neither should any of the above:

If these Pagan/Craft rituals have no meaning in your life, and if you have just come for the fellowship, then enjoy the fellowship and please do not attend the ritual. The circle is a significant part of our entire way of life, not a reenactment of some past event just for the sake of the pageantry. When we can, we are pleased to share it with you, and we do so in Love and Light with Peace and Laughter.

IDEAS FROM MERLIN THE ENCHANTER

1. Be Yourself... if you worry about what others think, then you won't think for yourself... and if you don't think for yourself, you may as well be dead!

2. Allow all others to be themselves... just because Joe Blow from kokomo has blue candles on his altar and you use only white ones, that doesn't mean he is the son of Satan. We must each one be allowed our own Pagan path in freedom, for if we cannot do that, then we have no freedom!

3. Let's stop all the silliness of who is and is not a Witch, and what one must do to be a witch.

4. Don't ask for someone's opinions unless you really want it! More Witch wars are started because someone asked for another's views and didn't like the answer they got!

5. Add a dose of good humor (the worst Witches are the ones that take everything so S-E-R-I-O-U-S-L-Y!)

IDEAS FROM BEKET ASER EDITHSDATTER

It is necessaru that we learn to bve just plain adult about working together - or even, just existing on the same planet.

1. If you can't tolerate any slightest deviation from your own tradition, do not take part in public or cross-cultural rituals or gatherings.

2. If you have ideas of what should be in the ritual; or what should not - go to the planning meeting and express your opinions.

3. If you delegate a task to someone else - you have made it their job. The only thing you have to say is "Thank you". When and how they do it is their buisness so long as it is done at the moment it is required.

4. Appoint somebody to keep notes of the planning meetings - as things are said, not afterwards, or, inevitably, there will be disagreements about the ground rules.

5. Gossip : There are a few situations wherein it is legitimate to pass on "gossip". the following suggestions are not all inclusive but may serve to give guidelines for judging:

a. When a major life change definately is occuring to someone with whom you and the person to whom you pass on the information - frequently work.

b. When you are acting as resource to help someone decrease a situation of disagreement.

c. When you really plan to take positive avtion to alleviate the situation the gossip refers to.

d. (This situation really does not occur all that often.) When warning someone about an individual whose practices are definately undesirable for a reason other than that you don't like them.

e. When you have truly accurate information to counteract damaging and inaccurate rumor.

6. When examining a situation to decide whether or not you, yourself, are under psychic attack, be sure to ask yourself if it couldn't be because being under attack makes you feel important.

7. Within the group or group structure, the High Priest and or High Priestess are generally entitled to your respect and a certain amount of deference. If they really, really don't know as much as you do, perhaps it is time that you take a fond and friendly leave of them/him/her and begin a group of your own.

Obviously, group or group affairs are appropriate subjects for discussion

amoung all the memebrs, and the HP/S definately should be willing to listen
to reasonable suggestions. However, you joined the group in order to learn from its eladers; a year or two of study probably doesn't qualify you to suddenly object to all their teachings, methods, and beliefs. Above all, it is inappropriate to try to stir up the whole group and "take over" the group. The leaders have put a good deal of time, patience, thought and teaching into building the group and giving it a good name - if you want to
be Witch Queen of the Universe, start your own group from scratch and try to become good enough to earn status yourself. The goal is not big groups, it is the best possible groups.

For group leaders: They need to be grown-up enough to know that every disagreement isn't necessarily a personal attack. They need to develop leadership skills to avoid confrontation and inflexibility. They need to know how to lead without dominating and they need an intense interest in the
health of the group. The HP/S needs to listen to the ideas of the members and to use their ideas whenever posssible. They should be able to explain rationally why certain ideas cannot be used.

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